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TAGS: SNAR NI

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: DRUG ENFORCEMENT AGENCY WINS FRESH
FUNDING

REF: ABUJA 2865

1.(C) Since early in the Nigerian fiscal year (which follows the calendar year) the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has suffered from severe budgetary shortfalls -- along with all GON Ministries and agencies -- that has left it operating on about 10 percent of its requested operating budget. According to NDLEA Chairman Bello Lafiaji, the agency has been operating on 1.9 million naira (approximately USD 14,000) a month since the beginning of the year. (Note: The operating budget is exclusive of salaries, which dome from another account. End Note) Lafiaji has made repeated appeals for increased funding through the Attorney General to the President's advisors, but had been rebuffed every time. In an October 17 meeting with RNLEO, Lafiaji disclosed that he met with President Obasanjo on October 15 to make a renewed appeal for funding. This time he brought with him the Attorney General and the National Security Advisor.

2.(C) Lafiaji's new approach paid off. The National Security Advisor (a personal friend of Lafiaji's) and the Attorney General presented a strong case for supporting the country's sole security agency fighting the drug trade. The President called in his Principal Secretary and instructed that 75 percent of the NDLEA's requested operating budget should be released immediately. Lafiaji estimates this at 75 million naira (approximately USD 650,000). Obasanjo also ordered the release of 115 million naira (approximately USD one million) in capital funds that the NDLEA Chairman had requested as part of the FY-02 budget. Finally, he acceded to Lafiaji's request for USD two million in matching funds as part of a UNODCCP project for the NDLEA's Academy in Jos.

3.(C) According to Lafiaji, the President's Principal Secretary, Stephen Oronsaye, pulled him aside after the

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meeting and incredulously asked Lafiaji "how did you get him to approve that money?" Oronsaye, who is responsible for signing the "warrants" releasing all federal funds, noted that such a large release of funds is extremely rare in the current budgetary crisis.

4.(C) Comment: Chairman Lafiaji has worked hard on a campaign to get the NDLEA the resources it needs to do its job and in doing so he has repeatedly highlighted the NDLEA's sole role in meeting the USG's narcotics certification criteria. Ambassador Jeter has joined him in this effort by raising the issue with the President and his advisors repeatedly. Persistence has paid off, though the benefits will last but a few months before a new fiscal year and a possible renewed budget crisis appears.

JETER